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IMPROVING NAVY MANAGEMENT
COMMUNICATION AT THE
LOCAL COMMAND LEVEL

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IMPROVING NAVY MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION
AT THE LOCAL COMMAND LEVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Management communication problems in an organization rarely lend themselves to a final and complete answer. Neither is this thesis intended as a remedy for all the communication needs of the Navy nor as an exhaustive study of all management communication writings that might be applicable to the Naval unit. It is intended, however, to provide an insight into Navy management communication problems, a statement of those problems, and the need for improvement. The applicability of civilian business concepts to the peculiar requirements of a Naval command will be investigated. Communication training and improvement programs currently in use by industry will be considered as a possible means of enhancing communication effectiveness at the local command level.

For purposes of this thesis, the term "local command level" will refer to the lowest level of command in the Navy. It will, therefore, include all individual units, exclusive of staffs. It should be recognized that the size of a local command may vary from a very few people to several thousand; that a huge naval station in the continental United States and a small seaplane tender in the Persian Gulf are both local commands; and that the missions of various local commands may be as diverse as their sizes and locations. This thesis is directed toward the local command because it is there that the communication

linkages must occur which will provide an opportunity for top level leadership to take effect. It is at the local command level where action becomes effective--the rest of the Navy directs and supports, but it is at the local command level where the interaction occurs which results in force being brought to bear towards an objective. It is to this level that all downward organizational communication gravitates. Since it is the lowest level of independent organizational action, it is also the most nearly comparable to individually operating business organizations and provides a useful area for direct comparison.

The management communication problems of the local command, although not necessarily unique, are often of a different nature than those which confront the Navy's top management and intermediate staffs. The emphasis is upon internal communication and more direct relationships between offices and individuals at the lower level, whereas exterior communication to superior and subordinate commands provides the area of primary interest at higher levels.

References to higher levels in the hierarchy will be made only to show how the local command communication problem is affected by superiors. When considering the applicability of management communication concepts to the individual command, the point of view of the commanding officer will normally be taken to facilitate discussion, although it is recognized that many concepts might be applicable at the lower levels within the command.

Mechanical and electronic devices that can increase

communication effectiveness and render amazing services to their fortunate masters are now available in a vast array of colors and sizes. They are rarely to be found, however, at the hierarchial level which is to be considered in this thesis. Therefore, they will not be considered. They systems and procedures field also offers many administrative advantages which may be considered somewhat akin to management communication improvement. This field will also be considered outside the province of this thesis in order to concentrate on the communication area. Consideration will be directed toward substantive, not mechanical, improvement. The primary interest must be in what can be done with present resources.

It should not be inferred from the title of this thesis that the local command provides the most fertile field for management communication improvement in the Navy. It may be that considerably greater strides could be taken at much higher levels in the hierarchy. This, of course, would be worthy of the efforts of all who may be in a position to effect that improvement. In the meantime, a study of communication principles and concepts, derived from current writings and U. S. industry practices may be beneficial to the local commander. It will be shown that the active support of local command "top management" is a basic requirement.

CHAPTER I

THE NAVY MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION PROBLEM

The Duke of Wellington, writing to the Secretary of State for War in 1810, said:

My Lord:

If I attempted to answer the mass of futile correspondence that surrounds me, I should be debarred from all serious business of campaigning.

I must remind your Lordship for the last time, that as long as I retain an independent position I shall see that no officer under my command is debarred by attending to the futile driveling of mere quill-driving in your Lordship's office from attending to his first duty--which is, and always has been, so to train the private men under his command that they may, without question, beat any force opposed to them in the field.

I am, my Lord, your obedient servant,

Wellington¹

Whether or not Wellington's forthright stand on his communication problem was a major factor in his subsequent successes in the "serious business of campaigning," it illustrates that military paperwork problems are not entirely the result of today's technological advances. Most of the remarkable strides that have been taken in the arts and sciences which have enabled the military man to arm himself

¹Quoted by Robert E. W. Harrison, in Comment and Discussion, U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 89, No. 11 (1963), p. 98.

with weapons of fearsome capability, however, have multiplied the communications problem. The book of instructions for the weapons available to Wellington, for instance, would bear little resemblance to the voluminous tomes requires for a modern weapons system.

That a serious communications problem exists in the United States Navy is attested to by most experienced Naval officers. As one officer sees it,

From the vantage point of more than a dozen years at sea, four consecutive commands, and two tours in the Pentagon, my opinion is that the U. S. Navy is in the grip of a fight against a force so strong, so insidious as to threaten seriously the combat effectiveness of each seagoing unit. The U. S. Navy today faces a message gap--a struggle to communicate a sense of purpose and direction and motivation which could be more decisive than any naval action in world history.

Never before have we had so many reams of instructions--and so little actual communication.

Never so many directives--and so little sense of direction.

Never so much required leadership training--never so little effective leadership.

The situation is common to many large organizations, since man has, in this century, developed a remarkable capacity for constructing mammoth organizations without the concomitant capability of managing them.

This crisis in administration is inevitably accompanied by a rising tide of paperwork, a blind fascination with administrative detail as an end rather than a means, a compulsive dedication to the word rather than the deed.

At no time in the history of our Navy has the commander of a ship had more combat potential at his command. Yet never before has the captain been rendered so powerless by administrative detail to command his own ship effectively.¹

¹Harvey O. Webster, "The Message Gap," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 89, No. 5 (1963), p. 29.

Many of the communications problems experienced in a military organization are similar to those of any large organization. In recent years, leaders of industry have become increasingly aware of the need for effective communication. As a result, communications experts have come to the fore and management has evidenced a new interest in communication improvement.

Even with the added emphasis, however, there often seems to be less actual communication. An obvious factor in both the business and military sectors is the sheer size of the organization. Increasing the size certainly compounds the problems of an organization in conveying information to every level.

The wide variance in educational backgrounds and interests accounts for another stumbling block on the communications path. In industry, the difference in vocabulary between individuals on the same hierarchial level is often a serious problem. Employees in the data processing department find it increasingly difficult to discuss their jobs with their counterparts in the production department. A similar problem exists in the military between the electronics specialist and the ordnanceman.

The availability of capable personnel to process the continually growing mountain of paperwork seems never to be quite in proportion. Consider the comments of an officer in a Navy patrol squadron, referring to the problems of the

administrative department.

Many new requirements have been laid on this department in the last ten years. While personnel administration has become more and more centralized in Washington and other distribution centers, with great batteries of accounting machines, offices in the field gradually but steadily have had to increase the volume of facts and figures that go to feed the insatiable hunger of the machines. The re-enlistment and career information programs have added many hours of requirements to be met.

Processing NESEP, NAVCAD, STAR, SCORE, and other programs is a time-consuming job. Administration of service-wide exams for advancement and pro-pay requires an all-out effort several times a year, as does the submission of evaluation sheets, which used to be no more than "report cards", but now are fitness reports that have to be submitted in the smooth on all petty officers second class and above. Additional pages and requirements for additional entries on pages in service records have reduced the number of records that one personnel man can maintain efficiently. The administration of justice has become a complicated technical procedure requiring a legal staff even at the lowest levels. The number of findings disapproved for technical legal reasons attests to the futility of amateurs trying to be lawyers and judges. The public information requirements for hometown news releases and letters to parents and wives whenever "Johnny" is advanced, or otherwise singled out, make a staggering requirement for originating and typing correspondence.

Directives are continually being received requiring additional collateral duties or special project assignments for one officer or another, and better than 50 percent of these duties fall within the purview of the administrative department. Controlling and tickling the reports required to satisfy IBM appetites and staff personnel is a mountainous job. Required leadership and career-training lectures and movies take away additional on-the-job time and do not pay for themselves when the people involved realize that they have to work overtime to make up for training time spent off the job.

What has been done to modernize, streamline, beef up, or otherwise compensate for these increased requirements? At present, the patrol squadron allowance calls for an administrative officer and his assistant, a personnel officer and his assistant, an information and education officer, a first lieutenant, three YNs, two PNs, and several SN/SA. What did we have ten

years ago? To the best of my recollection, exactly the same allowance! The workload that has been imposed on these people is neither sensible nor fair. In aviation parlance, we are on the backside of the power curve in the region of reverse command. The more work imposed, the less attractive are clerical billets. Consequently, it is harder to obtain strikers in these ratings, and more work has to be done by the personnel already committed to YN or PN careers.¹

Virtually every officer and man in the Navy has presented, at one time or another, at least one suggestion for what he deems to be a real improvement for the management communication problem.² Most of these suggestions are verbal, couched in other than learned terms, and not susceptible to use in this thesis. They generally have one common characteristic, regardless of their source; the area to be revised, improved, or deleted is somewhere upward in the chain of command.

It does seem that many of the problems described thus far can be attributed primarily to top management in the Navy. This may be true. It certainly seems that the paperwork requirements continue to be generated at a rapid clip and that the various programs which require so much of the administrator's time and effort are escalating. The net result, of course, is less time available for the basic requirements of management communication.

The tremendous increase in administrative communication

¹Robert A. Stephan, "The Forgotten Administrative Department," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 90, No. 1 (1964), pp. 131-32.

²Interview with Mr. Robert Meehan, Head of Office Methods Division, Navy Management Office, Washington, D. C., January 29, 1964.

in the Department of the Navy in the past few years has been recognized by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. The redtape procedures and excessive paperwork production have been ascribed to virtually all levels of the Navy and the corrective effort of all hands has been directed.¹

It seems unlikely, however, that any great, sweeping revision can be expected which will obviate the requirements for the flow of information in all directions in the military establishment. The huge appetites of the Bureau of Naval Personnel computers seem destined to gulp more and more personnel information. Weapons systems will continue to require tremendous quantities of the written work for their operation and maintenance instructions. The flow of direction and control information is basic to the large organization.

The Navy's management communication problems are real and not capable of solution at any one level. Regardless of whatever action is underway or contemplated at other levels, however, a clearcut requirement exists at the bottom rung of the ladder to ensure that the most effective methods are known and used. The concurrence of senior commands is an obvious need, but the active effort of the local command is the basic ingredient.

¹U. S. Department of the Navy, OPNAV Notice 5216.
Subject: Reduction of Administrative Correspondence in the
Operating Forces (September 11, 1963), p. 1.

CHAPTER II

THE BASICS OF COMMUNICATION

Definition

Communication is the act of conveying information from one individual to another.

By its definition, success is implied, since there is no communication if the transfer of information is not effected. By a literal application of this definition, surprisingly little of what is normally considered to be communication actually fits the description. A recent survey indicated that individuals on the vice-presidential level in large organizations understand only about two-thirds of what they hear from top management. Men on the production line get only about twenty per cent of it, according to the same survey.¹

The same kind of problems exist with written communications, according to the Navy Management Office.

Don't sell this business of communication short. The presence of station manuals, station orders, departmental instructions, up-to-date organization charts, and a book of functional statements doesn't guarantee, per se, that understanding has been conveyed, has been accepted. Understanding and acceptance are part and parcel of communication.

¹Robert Froman, "Understand What You Hear," Nation's Business (October 1961), p. 196.

A piece of paper may not communicate. See that everyone not only has the word, but can and does translate it into understanding, perspective, vision, and enthusiasm.

Understanding, more than any other thing, nourishes trust and respect, and an earnest desire to contribute. Understanding liberates creative thought--and management improvement ensues.¹

Management, or administrative, communication is a form of communication with a particular purpose. It may be defined as any communication intended to facilitate the management of an organized group.² Communication tends to bind an organization together. It is often difficult to separate the study of communication processes from an analysis of organization structure. Regardless of what other activities or skills are involved, the ability to communicate is inherent in any supervisory position. Management and supervision cannot occur without communication.³

Functions

Most management communication occurs as a result of an individual's desire to inform or to influence another's behavior. It is important that this simple precept be

¹"The Manager and His Staff," Printed Document of the Navy Management Office, Department of the Navy, Washington, D. C., p. 7.

²Lee Thayer, Administrative Communication (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1961), p. 7.

³Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 154.

thoroughly considered. The quality of a letter must be determined on the basis of whether or not it performs the function for which it was intended. An executive should prepare and deliver a speech to accomplish a function, not to be making a speech. The ability to differentiate between the desired end and the means to accomplish that end is a basic attribute of a communicator.

Most authorities list a number of functions that can be served by management communications. Although this may provide a useful means for classifying further discussions on the subject, it is deemed more appropriate and meaningful simply to make the observation that each communication must perform a function or be labeled ineffective.

Media and Forms

For practical purposes, there are but two media for management communications--visual and aural. All written communication, drawings, signs, photographs, and any other communication received through the sense of sight are included in the former. All oral communication and any other communication received by way of the sense of hearing are included in the latter.¹ The relative efficiency of the two basic media is an important consideration, even though scientific data concerning how individuals react to each is not sufficiently

¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 250.

complete to answer all the questions about them. It is known, of course, that reactions differ according to education, background, general interest, and experience.¹

Most communications are in the two basic forms--oral and written. The oral form generally offers the advantage of accompanying gestures, tones of voice, and facial expressions to enhance the effects of the spoken words. It is particularly adaptable to situations which are dynamic and may require changes momentarily. If the situation provides for face to face confrontation and interaction, an additional advantage accrues in that the communicator is provided an opportunity to observe immediately whether or not his information has, in fact, been communicated. This feedback also provides the communicator with an indication of the recipient's attitude as a result of the communication. In other words, he is in a position to determine if the information was received and, if so, what reaction it triggered. The recipient is often able to request clarification immediately, if any lack of understanding exists.

Written communication may often be more authoritative, because it seems more formal and concrete. It is also necessary when the subject is complicated and a particular need exists to avoid distortion. Written communication also provides a record of the transaction, which is often desirable, but may

¹Charles E. Redfield, Communication in Management (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 63.

have drawbacks in some instances. In the business world, information concerning certain practices may be of a confidential nature. Setting forth such information in written form, therefore, necessitates its careful protection against unauthorized disclosure. Similar problems exist in military organizations with classified material. In addition, although reducing standard operating procedures and company policy to writing is often desirable, it may result in resistance to change and a lack of flexibility. Subordinates are also more likely to lean heavily on written instructions to cover every eventuality; a situation which can result in the stifling of ingenuity and initiative.

The choice between written and oral means of communication must be made only after considering the aspects of a particular situation. It generally requires less effort and less time to communicate orally. This method is particularly adaptable to instruction of workers in a dynamic situation, particularly where their educational level may preclude their ready understanding of detailed written instructions. The situation may require a combination of the two means. It is often desirable to initiate action quickly by means of an oral instruction, with a written directive as back up and a provision for a lasting record of the event.

More will be said of the relative merits of written and oral communication in connection with specific situations. It should be noted at this juncture, however, that the paper

colossus in the Department of the Navy may well be the result of too much reliance on written communication. An urgent need to reduce paperwork is indicated.¹

Receiver Skills--Listening and Reading

In the search for improved communication methods, the emphasis is mostly on the side of the communicator--the individual who constructs the messages. The role of the communicatee is indispensable to the process, however, as indicated by Henry H. Albers:

The best message is of little avail unless the person at the receiving end listens or reads and makes an effort to understand. We often speak without listeners and speak when we ought to be listening. And we frequently fail to find readers for the avalanche of words that make up the memoranda, letters, and reports of the organizational world. A partial solution is to speak less and say more and to write shorter, fewer, and better messages. But a great deal more attention should also be given to the development of listening and reading skills.²

In order to provide some background in the basics of communication as a stepping stone to improvement at the local command level, then, some consideration of listening and reading skills seems appropriate.

Ralph G. Nichols, in listing several guides to good

¹U. S. Department of the Navy, OPNAV Notice 5216.
Subject: Reduction of Administrative Correspondence in the
Operating Forces (September 11, 1963), p. 1.

²Henry H. Albers, Organized Executive Action: Decision Making, Communication, and Leadership (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1961), p. 373.

listening, suggests that listening is not the passive function many believe, but is really hard work.¹ It is characterized by a quicker circulation of the blood and a small rise in bodily temperature. An effective listener must make an active effort, must look for ideas and resist distractions. Nichols also indicates that the average person has the ability to think at about four times the normal speaking rate of 125 words per minute. By failing to make profitable use of that extra thinking speed, many people find themselves considering subjects other than the speaker's and missing part of what is being said. Anticipating the speaker's comments and mentally weighing his evidence are suggested as means of staying with him and converting the speed differential to a listening asset.

Prejudices and foregone conclusions can create an atmosphere which makes listening difficult. The very mention of certain words tends to conjure up thoughts and emotional reactions that can blot out anything else the speaker has to say.² Mention of income taxes at a time when the filing deadline is approaching will cause many listeners to become ex-listeners if they fail to make a conscious effort to overcome this distraction. Some individuals require a conscious effort to avoid bias in their feelings for the speaker and the

¹Ralph G. Nichols, "Listening is a 10-part Skill," Nation's Business (July 1957), p. 16.

²Albers, op. cit., p. 374.

resultant inability to really listen to what he has to say.

Recognizing that listening is a skill which can be learned, many companies have provided courses to improve employees' abilities in this vital area.¹ Even a basic discussion of efficient listening was found to provide an awareness which resulted in considerably improved marks on listening tests. Listening training need not be extensive to be effective--an occasional lecture which points up the advantages can improve communication at virtually every level.

Reading is a skill similar to listening in many respects and also requires considerable concentration and effort to be effective. Although many people become skilled readers on their own, reading improvement courses have been extremely successful in many instances. A reading course given to motion picture executives, for instance, increased reading speed from an average of 250 to 300 words per minute to about 800 words per minute.² Evidence indicates that an increase in reading speed may also result in increased comprehension.

Many companies have seen the need for reading improvement programs, as well as for listening training. Training in both skills would seem applicable to a Naval

¹Nichols, op. cit., p. 14.

²Wila Banton Smith, Read Faster--and Get More From Your Reading (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958), p. 363.

unit. In view of the excessive paperwork problems at all levels in the Navy, it would seem particularly appropriate that those who must deal with this colossus have the advantage of the increased reading speed that a reading improvement program could provide. An increase in reading rate similar to that experienced by the motion picture executives referred to above could provide a significant contribution to management communication improvement at the local command level.

Informal Communication

Informal communication may be considered to be any communication that is not provided for in the formal communication system in the organization. At one time, it was thought of as an evil which should be discouraged at all costs, because it tended to spread rumor and destroy reputation. Although the grapevine, as informal communication is commonly called, does have some undesirable aspects, it may also be beneficial. It is generally conceded that it cannot be completely eliminated or controlled, but that it can be influenced if it is understood.¹

To summarize the characteristics of the grapevine as one authority on the subject sees them:

¹ Keith Davis, "Management Communication and the Grapevine," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 31, No. 5 (1953), p. 49.

1. It cannot be eliminated or suppressed.
2. It is faster than formal communication.
3. It is influential.
4. It is often incorrect.
5. It cannot be held responsible for mistakes.
6. It can occasionally be useful when formal communication is inappropriate.
7. It is not shown on the organization chart.
8. It does not normally follow the chain of command.¹

The grapevine is generally built about the social and personal relationships of people in an organization. The chain of command, therefore, has little effect on it, but car pools, bowling teams, and informal lunch groups may be quite significant. Leaders of these informal groups are likely to become rather influential, sometimes without realizing the full capability of this influence. Since personal relationships provide the core of the grapevine, it is to be expected that the aims will be personal also and not necessarily the same as the goals of the organization.

Keith Davis' study of the informal communication process led him to conclude that certain people in an organization may become "liaison individuals" for grapevine information. It was noted particularly that the management

¹Don H. Scott, "Letting the Grapevine Take Over," Sales Management, Vol. 84 (March 18, 1960), pp. 54-55.

group developed certain persons who would pass along information to other selected individuals. These "liaison individuals" were not always the same people; the type of information being the determining factor. He also determined that the grapevine was likely to pass along only current information. Generally, the grapevine was selective and discriminating, although it could not always be relied upon to be so.¹

The studies conducted by Davis also indicated that informal communication tended to supplement formal communication, but did not replace it. They showed a tendency for informal communication to take effect downward or horizontally at higher levels in most instances. Informal communication upward, if it existed at all, was slow and via the chain of command. Davis accounts for this by saying that higher levels in the management hierarchy recognized the need for communication more readily and had more time for it.²

Don H. Scott suggests the development of regular and dependable formal communication systems to minimize the unwanted effects of the grapevine. To paraphrase his recommendations for managers:

1. Become informed.
2. Develop a willingness to communicate.
3. Establish a reputation for sincerity and truth.

¹Davis, loc. cit., p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 48.

4. Keep employees informed of any managerial action that will affect them.
5. Get the grapevine on the side of management.
6. Establish communication procedure.

Reduction of employee anxiety results in less need for the grapevine.¹

Informal communication is not predictable in every instance, but it is a definite force to be reckoned with in every organization. A study will reveal which subordinates are participating in the grapevine and what their areas of interest are. An example of how the grapevine may be made to work for the organization is provided by an occurrence aboard a United States Navy ship during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The ship had been at sea for several weeks and the most trying period of the crisis had long since past. The crew was becoming anxious for some word of when they would be returning to port, for it now seemed certain that the major conflict had been averted. Not even the commanding officer, however, knew exactly when the ship would be ordered back. A telephone call to the quartermaster to check on the time of tides at the home port on a particular day in the future, however, was sufficient to initiate the flow of grapevine information and, in short order, the word had

¹ Scott, loc. cit., p. 56.

permeated every corner of the ship. Fortunately, the ship returned to port before the predicted date.¹ The particular method used in this case may be questioned, but little argument can be had with its effectiveness or the efficiency of the grapevine.

¹ Interview with Lieutenant Commander Wilbert Knutson, Washington, D. C., February 11, 1964.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATING DOWNWARD

Orders and Instructions

The process of communication provides the means by which leadership takes effect.¹ An organization, regardless of how well designed and staffed it may be, relies on the communication of orders and directives downward through the various levels. Information about the work to be done is one of the most important things a manager communicates about. There are many different ways of conveying that information, however, and a thorough appraisal of the situation is important to selecting the most effective method.

Chester I. Barnard emphasized that an individual will accept a communication as authoritative only when four conditions exist:

1. He can and does understand the communication.
2. At the time of his decision he believes that it is not inconsistent with the purpose of the organization.

¹ Keith Davis, Human Relations in Business (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. 228.

3. At the time of his decision, he believes it to be compatible with his personal interest as a whole.
4. He is able mentally and physically to comply with it.¹

These conditions appear to be applicable to the local command level of the Navy, as well as to the business world. Careful consideration and thought applied to the full implications of these conditions might do much to improve management communications. As a matter of fact, adherence to the principles suggested provide a complete basis for order giving. The futility of communicating an order to an individual who does not have the capability to understand it seems apparent. In a military organization, where unquestioning obedience to the order of a superior is required, each individual must believe that the order is not inconsistent with the purpose of the organization. Even the third condition set forth by Barnard is applicable to the military. Although it may not be readily recognized, the Marine who has accepted an order to storm an enemy emplacement which is so well protected as to invite certain death to an intruder has determined that he is acting in accordance with his personal interest. The nature of that personal interest undoubtedly varies with the individual.

¹Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 165.

Some may accept such an order solely out of patriotism. Some may do it "for the Corps"--and some may simply be motivated by the threat of negative sanctions. Whatever the reason, it is compatible with the individual's personal interest to accept the order.

The fourth condition suggested by Barnard may be so obvious that it is frequently neglected. If an individual does not have the capability of complying with an order effectively, he is indeed likely to reject it. Unrealistic requirements, such as "continuous supervision" of some project by a petty officer, or the imposition of a training program which cannot be completed due to other work requirements, will not be accepted.

The most famous demonstration of the futility of trying to obey all orders was given by the skipper during World War II who complied with the regulation to unclip all ammunition daily--and proved that all hands could not do it in the 24 hours.¹

Barnard's acceptance theory states that:

If a directive communication is accepted by one to whom it is addressed, its authority for him is confirmed or established. It is admitted as the basis of action. Disobedience of such a communication is a denial of its authority for him. Therefore, under this definition the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the persons to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in "persons of authority" or those who issue these orders.²

¹Herbert Fox Rommel, in Comment and Discussion, U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 89, No. 11 (1963), p. 99.

²Barnard, op. cit., p. 163.

In giving an order, then, it will be effective only if accepted by the person for whom intended, regardless of the rank or position of the order giver. The Glenn L. Martin Company has suggested the following general guides to help superiors gain acceptance of the orders they issue:

A request doesn't offend the sensitive worker, while a direct order often antagonizes.

The direct order--if not used too frequently--stands out emphatically. It tends to shock a worker out of his lethargy, and may save a dismissal.

A request may partly melt the hard-boiled man, and is worth trying before a direct order.

The implied order usually gets best results from the dependable worker. But it is not for the inexperienced or unreliable.

The first time an error is made, a request to correct it adds the friendliness that keeps a man on your side. The direct order may be advisable on repetition of the error.

The direct order is appropriate for the chronic violator--and if most of your orders have been requests, the change to a direct order will carry emphasis.

The call for volunteers often is a challenge and produces good results where the job is disagreeable, calls for special effort or involves unpopular overtime. But don't use it to escape responsibility for making assignments in the best interests of production.

To develop ability and judgment in a promising employee, the implied or suggestive order is a good way of trying him out and putting him on his own. Close follow-up may be required, however.

The emergency usually requires a direct order.¹

¹Reproduced in: M. Joseph Doohar and Vivienne Marquis (ed.), Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 106.

As suggested, there are times when the direct order is required. This is probably the case more often in the military than in a civilian organization and there certainly should be no hesitancy in making use of it. The nature of military duties requires unquestioning obedience to the direct order--and with good reason. A request or implied order, however, provides a subordinate with an opportunity to do more than the minimum required. It would seem to be to the superior's advantage to determine who is likely to accept such an opportunity. An improvement in management communication may be only one of several advantages that could accrue to such a determination.

Certain functions which tend to be repetitive in nature and which reflect the general tenor of an organization may be carried out by subordinates with a minimum of communication if susceptible to description as a policy of the organization. Once the particular evolution is defined and set forth by management, further time-consuming instructions are obviated. Policy directives provide a most efficient means of directing the efforts of subordinates when properly administered. The need for careful consideration of policy matters is inherent; broader dissemination and a wider range of subordinate courses of action are generally implied.

Policy is simply management's attitude. It is reasonable to assume that the chief executive officer of a company has, from experience, arrived at attitudes concerning how the operations under his jurisdiction will be conducted. It is likewise reasonable to assume that his attitudes must be

communicated continually down the line of organization if operations are to proceed according to his plan. Written policies are one means of transmitting management's attitudes.¹

In modern management the use of manuals to communicate policies and decisions is gaining favor.² The manuals must be readable and readily accessible to the user, if they are to accomplish their purpose. In order to maintain the effectiveness of a manual, specific provisions should be made to keep it up to date. By their nature, manuals provide only for communication down; some method must therefore be incorporated to enable users to communicate up the line when operating experiences indicate a need for change or reconsideration of policy. This feedback can be included in the manual revision system. Regular audits should be scheduled to review the manual and coordinate its revision or reissue.

The application of policy directives to the local command level in the Navy may provide an opportunity for more efficient use of personnel in management communication. Close scrutiny of the wording of policy matters and attention to the details of current policy application might provide an area of management communication enhancement worthy of the local commander's full attention.

¹James G. Hendrick, "Company Manuals," Systems and Procedures, ed. Victor Lazzaro (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 258.

²Ibid., p. 248.

Providing Motivation

Information which flows from the top is often thought of as being solely in the form of orders which are essential to the operation of the organization. Part of the communication directed downward, however, may be only indirectly related to operations and some may bear no discernible relationship at all.¹ Letters to individual employees concerning the company's credo and listing the community service efforts of the previous year, for example, may bear little relationship to order giving. Handbooks for new employees are not really a necessary adjunct to the direction of their efforts on the job.

Keeping the employee informed is deemed an essential part of good relations. Studies by the United States Chamber of Commerce, The American Management Association, and The Association of National Advertisers have indicated that an employee needs to know the aims of the organization in order to become more closely identified with it. This was found to be true for workers in the factory or in the office; at all levels of the organization.²

Several methods were found to be effective for use as machinery for communicating down. In addition to new employee handbooks and individual letters to employees, trips

¹ Redfield, op. cit., p. 47.

² Stuart Chase, "Communication Up, Down, and Sideways," Readers' Digest (September 1952), p. 56.

around the plant and open house visits were found to serve the purpose admirably.¹

It would seem that the need to keep subordinates conversant with the mission and tasks assigned would be as important in a Naval organization as in any other. It may be that this is recognized in the Naval organization, but is applied only to the immediate task at hand. Instead of focusing on the objectives of the whole Naval Establishment in the weeks, months, and years ahead, the emphasis may be on what the ship expects to accomplish in the next gunnery exercise. A man needs to know his immediate objective, of course, but he also needs much more. The studies of civilian industry indicate that most employees are capable of looking at the goal of the whole organization.² When the methods of downward communication are utilized, then, care must be taken to assure that the goals assigned are appropriate. The motivation of subordinates seems a most appropriate goal. As recognized by Emile Durkheim, writing at a much earlier date,

And truly, if he does not know whither the operations he performs are tending, if he relates them to no end, he can only continue to work through routine. Every day he repeats the same movements with monotonous regularity, but without being interested in them. He is no longer a living cell of a living organism which unceasingly vibrates with neighboring cells, which acts upon them, and to whose actions is no longer anything but an inert piece of machinery, only

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 57.

an external force set going which always moves in the same direction and in the same way.¹

The effect on employee attitude must always be considered when passing information down the line. Adherence to the following principles may be of benefit in this regard:

1. Try to provide advance information, when possible.
2. Tell only the truth.
3. Explain why.
4. Pass out the bad information with the good.
5. Encourage subordinates to speak up and to make comments or ask questions.²

The advantage of adhering as closely as possible to these principles is primarily lodged in the fact that respect for management will accrue only when managers have developed the reputation for worthwhile, timely, and reliable information.

¹ Emile Durkheim, "Division of Labor and Independence," Human Relations in Administration, ed. Robert Durbin (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), pp. 42-43.

² "When to Speak Up," Nation's Business, Vol. 51, No. 3 (1963), p. 91.

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNICATING UPWARD

The Need

There are many values, however, that accrue to those managers who listen willingly, who urge their subordinates to talk freely and honestly. Upward communication reveals to them the degree to which ideas passed down are accepted. In addition, it stimulates employees to participate in the operation of their department or unit and, therefore, encourages them to defend the decisions and support the policies cooperatively developed with management. The opportunity for upward communication also encourages employees to contribute valuable ideas for improving departmental or company efficiency. Finally, it is through upward communication that executives and supervisors learn to avert the many explosive situations which arise daily in industry.¹

Although oriented toward civilian industry, the thoughts expressed above would seem to have equal application to the military manager. Upward communication can provide the feedback needed to determine not only whether information was received and understood, but also whether it was accepted. The manager can thereby determine the extent to which his authority has been established, as well as the effectiveness of downward communication. If it can be determined that orders

¹Earl G. Planty and William Machaver, "Stimulating Upward Communication," Effective Communication of the Job, ed. M. Joseph Dooher and Vivienne Marquis (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 134.

and instructions from the superior are readily understood, a reduction in management communication downward may be effected-- a result devoutly to be desired at the Navy's local command level.

Subordinates who can communicate their feelings and ideas to management may find less need to criticize superiors. If the employee feels that his suggestions and complaints have reached a higher level, and have received consideration at that level, he may be less inclined to complain to others at his own level. Although military organizations are not generally noted for their democratic precepts, all subordinates retain some belief in their own inherent worth and the worth of their ideas. The opportunity to express ideas provides an opportunity to retain personal dignity and to identify to some degree with the management of the organization.

Methods

The solution to the question of how best to promote communication upward may seem quite easily arrived at by superiors in military organizations. The ease with which a report can be required of subordinates is legendary. The need for reports is recognized, but an over-emphasis or the requirement for an excessive number of reports can be unfortunate.

There is danger that at some point reports may become as important, or even more important, than the job itself. Sometimes this results from an overemphasis being placed on the reports by those who prescribe them and, therefore, by those who prepare them. In other cases, the

reports become so enmeshed with operations that neither can be revised without upsetting the other.¹

An example of how the report can become the paramount consideration is provided by the story of one foreman who gave instructions in great detail to the operators of a certain piece of machinery. Having operated the machinery for some time, the operators knew that it could provide the required output only if their own method were utilized--not the one specified by the foreman. In reporting the details of the machinery operation, the operators were careful to put down readings that the foreman expected; not the actual ones. By so doing, they met the requirements for production and for reporting, but the reports produced were solely for the purpose of keeping the foreman happy.²

At the local command level, consideration might be given to reducing required reports by some application of the management by exception principle. Unfortunately, encouraging the reporting of only those events which require action by management may reduce the upward flow of communication to a point where information requirements are not met. Subordinates may interpret an attempt to reduce the extraneous communication flow as a lack of interest in the occurrences

¹Redfield, op. cit., p. 134.

²Burleigh B. Gardner and William F. Whyte, "The Man in the Middle: Position and Problems of the Foreman," Applied Anthropology, Vol. 4 (1945), p. 43.

at the lower levels. The unit commander may well find this to be an area where written reports can be curtailed, while encouraging verbal communication flow.

Interviewing often provides an effective means of encouraging upward communication.

Interviewing produces facts plus a wealth of other information that would not flow upward routinely--attitudes and opinions, suggestions and complaints, rumors, beliefs, feelings, needs, hopes, frustrations, and motivations.¹

This is a tool extensively used in Navy organizations. It would seem particularly useful when conducted as a subordinate is leaving the command, whether he is being transferred to another command or separated from the Service. During such an exit interview, the interviewee might be expected to provide information with a great deal of candor, since he can assume that he is less subject to sanctions of immediate superiors and peers.

The interviewing technique may spell the difference between the eliciting of valuable information and a wasted session. Since the interview is an expensive communication technique in terms of management time expended, care should be taken to ensure its effectiveness. The interviewer's attitude and his ability to listen will encourage the subordinate and help to put him at ease. The physical setting for the interview will also contribute to this end. The interviewer

¹Redfield, op. cit., p. 159.

should normally refuse most of the opportunities provided him to comment on what he has heard, making only a non-committal remark or rephrasing a statement. If notes are required, they should be only the minimum, so as not to inhibit the interviewee.¹

Ideally, a communication should follow the chain of command, step by step, upward through the organization until it reaches the level where appropriate action can be taken to handle the problem effectively.² At many Navy commands, a certain time is set aside by the executive officer to hear requests from members of the crew.³ These request masts provide an opportunity for an individual to air any problems he may have that have not been solved at a lower level. This practice is excellent in that it provides the aggrieved one with an opportunity to carry his complaint to someone higher than his immediate superior. The necessity for submitting a formal request may deter some, however. In addition, the knowledge that the immediate superior may find it objectionable that the individual concerned has taken his problem over the head of that superior may cause some people to forget the whole thing.

¹ Ibid., p. 165.

² Planty and Machaver, loc. cit., p. 144.

³ John F. Noel, Jr. and William J. Miller, The Bluejackets' Manual (17th ed.; Annapolis, Md.: U. S. Naval Institute, 1963), p. 59.

Local command "top management" should consider the desirability of minimizing these deterrents if this channel of upward communication is to be effective.

According to Keith Davis, the informal communication chain will provide little assistance in upward communication. His studies indicate that the flow of information upward via the grapevine was minimal and slow.¹ This would seem to indicate the need for stimulating and encouraging the flow of information through formal channels. Whatever methods are utilized for upward communication, care must be taken to ensure that a cross-section of information is obtained. To get a true picture of conditions, some planning is required to preclude the possibility that some aggressive individuals may cause the entire situation to be slanted toward their views.

Barriers

Even though management may appreciate the need for effective upward communication, it may not translate this need into action. It becomes apparent at once that to swim up the stream of communication is a much harder task than to flow downstream. The currents of resistance, inherent in the temperament and habits of supervisors and employees and in the complexity and structure of modern industry, are persistent and strong.²

¹ Davis, "Management Communication and the Grapevine," p. 48.

² Planty and Machaver, loc. cit., p. 137.

A discussion of some of the impediments that tend to preclude free flow of communication upward may assist in the removal of these obstructions.

The subordinate often has little incentive to communicate upward. This may generally be traced to the fact that superiors failed to act constructively on previous communications. An indication of lack of interest by management discourages any future attempts to convey information.

The subordinate usually lacks the facilities for communicating upward. Management may use meetings, memoranda, bulletin boards, et cetera, to communicate down the line and is in a position to add to the list of facilities if the need arises. Subordinates, however, must ordinarily make use of whatever facilities are provided by management. The superior may generally be expected to have a better command of the language and will normally be able to translate his thoughts into words and communicate them more effectively. In addition, authority and prestige tend to reenforce communication down, whereas these very things often become barriers to be overcome in communicating upward.

If the information being communicated upward is in the nature of some unsolved problem of the organization, it may be construed as a criticism of management, with the attendant tendency of the part of the manager to reject or resist it. A very real barrier may therefore be placed in

the way of communication.

The sheer size or complexity of the organization may be sufficient to delay or reduce upward communication. It may be anticipated that several management layers will tend to minimize upward flow. As indicated by Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey, following a study of corporate communication problems in seventeen companies, it may be that the flow of information is obstructed on purpose. Opinion Research, as quoted in the Washington Post, suggests that the individual who blocks passage of the word might do so for the following reasons:

He is second in command, or "gate keeper", through which all communications must pass before they reach the top man. But this system falls down if the No. 2 man only tells his superior what he thinks the boss wants to hear. In these cases, the head man starts to operate with a "distorted view of reality," Opinion Research says.

.....

He is one of two rivals competing for a higher job and keeps information to himself to enhance his own reputation or detract from his rival's standing.

He is a manager who appears unapproachable to his employees through "temperament, ignorance or inadvertance." Or he is available but always talks instead of listening.

He is a department manager who covers up his departmental inefficiency to make himself look good and suggests deficiencies in areas outside his domain.¹

Information need not be completely blocked to cause

¹"Didn't Get the Word? Maybe it's Deliberate," The Washington Post, August 25, 1963, p. 7.

considerable difficulty. Both deliberate and nondeliberate distortion can affect the upward flow of information as well. The nature of the superior-subordinate relationship frequently gives rise to deliberate distortion.

Subordinates sometimes deliberately distort the information they send up the line to protect their interests and make their performance look good to superiors. A confession of mistakes may be good for the soul, but it does not generally lead to promotion and pay increases. Subordinates are inclined to take the sting out of failures by withholding and slanting information and to unduly emphasize any measure of success that may come their way. Another problem in upward communication is the tendency to cater to the likes and dislikes of the superior. Make the boss feel good even if it means stretching the truth a little or a great deal. Don't disturb his personal equilibrium with news he doesn't like to hear. The logic seems to be that a happy boss gives rewards and an unhappy boss exacts penalties.¹

Providing the subordinate with a chance to express his sentiments and attempting to promote a feeling of loyalty to the superior may help to reduce deliberate information distortion. Confidence in the aims of management and the development of trust in the organization would further this program.

Nondeliberate distortion may result from the semantic problem or from processing, handling or transporting problems. As information flows from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, it may be expected that more and more details will be left out. This process of abstraction is subject to

¹Albers, op. cit., p. 360.

the various judgments of the people who pass the information along--every level views it from a slightly different viewpoint. Albers suggests a possible solution to this problem.

Some distortion in the upward and downward flow of information can be eliminated by the use of information facilities that have some degree of independence from the chain of command. Thus, information obtained through an employee counseling program can be used to check information received through regular channels. A suggestion system may provide important additional information about the situation at lower levels. Staff assistants can be used to obtain information from various parts of the organization, but, of course, they should be careful not to give the impression that they are spying. Periodic personal visits with lower echelon executives and employees offer another approach. However, such techniques involve a short-circuiting of the chain of command and can have adverse consequences if improperly done or carried to the extreme.¹

This suggestion would seem particularly applicable to a Navy command. A short, informal conversation with a man on the hangar deck or in the engine room not only provides direct access to the tenor of feeling at that level, but is an indication that the "old man" is interested in the welfare of the crew.

By far the most effective method of tapping the ideas of subordinates is sympathetic listening in the many day-to-day, informal contacts within the departments and outside the workplace. There are no full-blown systems that will do the job in any easier manner. No delegation of a manager's responsibility to know the thoughts and attitudes of his subordinates is possible. This is a job which must in the main be done individually, painstakingly, and with understanding and sympathy.

¹Ibid., p. 364.

It is not something to be accomplished by a high-pressure drive or through a mechanical system. Nothing can equal a manager's willingness to hear.¹

Albers' warning of the dangers of bypassing the chain of command should be thoroughly considered, however. To create an aura of distrust in the intermediate levels could cause a complete breach in the flow of information upward through normal channels.

Summary

A requirement exists for management to be able to determine the extent to which ideas and instructions are received and accepted at the lower levels and to be in a position to evaluate subordinate feelings and ideas. This feedback is no less necessary in a military organization and can be reliably and consistently obtained only by a conscious effort on the part of management. A reduction in management communication requirements can often be effected by an efficient upward information flow--the need for excessive and repetitive downward communication having thereby been averted.

Although written reports provide the desired flow of information, they contribute to paperwork excesses. Written reports should therefore be minimized at the local command level.

Both deliberate and nondeliberate distortion of information may be expected. Encouraging confidence in

¹

Planty and Machaver, loc. cit., p. 147.

superiors' aims and the use of facilities independent of the chain of command present possible solution areas at the local command level.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNICATING HORIZONTALLY

The Need

Great size and specialization cut down the opportunities for cross-talk while they increase the need for it. If there is to be coordinated effort, there must be methods for the horizontal interchange of information.¹

Horizontal communication provides the opportunity for individuals in one part of an organization to understand the problems of those in other divisions or departments. It can become the basis for empathy, which can, in turn, result in cooperation and more effective direction of the efforts of the parts toward the accomplishment of the aims of the whole. The methods of horizontal communication are not exclusively horizontal, are often by-products of vertical communication.

Although most local commands in the Navy are not of the size and complexity of the giant industrial organizations of the business world, the tendency to specialize in the various departments and the diverse aims of the various divisions make consideration of the possible benefits of

¹Redfield, op. cit., p. 197.

horizontal communication worthwhile.

Committees and Conferences

Edward C. Schleh defines a committee as: " . . . any group of two or more people who get together to discuss a problem."¹ David C. Phillips seems to be discussing the same kind of evolution when he says, "Whether it is called conference, discussion, group dynamics, or an aspect of human relations, the ability of people to sit down together and discuss a common problem is needed in industry today."² Since the terms "committee" and "conference" seem to be used interchangeably in writings on the subject of horizontal communications generally, they will not be differentiated in this thesis.

A survey of executive attitudes on the subject of committee organization might well lead to the frustrating conclusion that committees must be the worst and the best means to achieve a goal. One side of the argument is illustrated by such comments as: the best committee is a three-man committee with two men absent; minutes are taken, but hours are wasted. In spite of such criticism, committees are found in many organizations and, when properly used, are important instruments of managerial action.³

¹ Edward C. Schleh, Successful Executive Action (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955), p. 76.

² David C. Phillips, Oral Communication in Business (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 135.

³ Albers, op. cit., p. 158.

By providing insights into the problems of others, committees provide for a broader, more comprehensive point of view. Since it is rare indeed for one department to be exclusively concerned with all aspects of a given problem area, committees can bring together the various departments for resolution of problems and for decision-making. This also provides for more reliable judgment, since extreme views tend to be moderated somewhat by the interaction.

Committees and conferences provide subordinate managers with an opportunity to be heard and to contribute in areas which might normally be closed to them. By having had an opportunity to be heard and to participate in the decision making process, they may be more inclined to accept a decision, even though they may have opposed that particular course of action during the committee discussion. An excellent training ground for managers is one of the important by-products of committees and conferences. Even where an individual does not actively participate, he is provided an opportunity to observe his seniors' activities in an environment in which he may some day find himself.

Committees and conferences also provide an excellent opportunity for vertical communication, both upward and downward. They provide management with a chance to pass the word to several people at the same time, while obtaining an indication of subordinate reaction at the same time.

A serious disadvantage of committee action is the tendency to consume considerable time in accomplishing the

stated purpose. When the time utilized is applied to the salaries of the members, it can be seen that considerable expense may also be involved. The time and expense should be minimized, of course, by close adherence to a pre-planned agenda and the tight control of the chairman. Committees and conferences are also sometimes criticized for their inability to obtain decisive results. By their nature, it may be anticipated that compromise will play an important part in decision making, with resultant dilution of the result.

The American Management Association conducted a study to determine the relative efficiency of committee and individual approaches to various problems dealing with twelve management functions.¹ During the study, executives were interviewed and records examined in twenty organizations and the results classified in four categories of effectiveness. The results indicated that individual action was superior in problems involving the functions of leadership, execution, decision making, and organizing. Committees, however, were considered more effective in dealing with problems that involved the interests of different departments within the organization.

Automatic Horizontal Communication

Joseph L. Massie has suggested the use of "automatic

¹Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, Research Report No. 20 (New York: American Management Association, 1952), pp. 92-93.

horizontal communication" to make use of the better features of committees and conferences with a resultant decrease in management communication for higher executives.¹ This approach suggests that each executive be expected to check his proposals with the plans of every other executive on the same level in order to maintain coordination. The onus is thereby placed upon the prpounder of a course of action to have cleared it with others at his level, or at least have their ideas on the subject, before continuing. In this way, many decisions are made and the action carried out without any exertion of initiative on the part of the higher executive.

This job of searching for consistent actions among executives is often handled by committees. Automatic verbal communications, however, would cause many more matters to be informally and routinely handled by direct contact among specialists, generally two at a time, and later reported to higher levels. According to Massie,

Organization theory necessarily assumes such direct contact between two executives, but too often it treats them informally and even haphazardly. A more detailed analysis would enable management specialists to understand the proper place and role of these contacts and, possibly, to develop models which will make them more dependable and efficient.²

¹Joseph L. Massie, "Automatic Horizontal Communication in Management," Current Issues and Emerging Concepts in Management, ed. Paul M. Dauten, Jr. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962), p. 112.

²Ibid., p. 113.

Here is an area that may have considerable practical application at the local command level in the Navy. As proposed, Massie's idea of automatic horizontal communication is really a form of management by exception with a built-in plan for cross-referencing problems among managers at the same level. To make practical use of this idea in a Navy unit, the following are suggested as basic requirements:

1. The commanding officer must wholeheartedly support the plan. This will mean, if he is to expect automatic horizontal communication between his department heads, that he be willing to allow those department heads some discretion and some authority to deal with problems at their levels. It will also mean that the commanding officer will not be able to keep informed of the minute details that are within the province of the department heads. In short, it means that if the commanding officer is to accept this plan to reduce vertical management communication problems, he must be willing to get along with less detailed information and rely on his immediate juniors for information on the things he really needs to know.

2. The commanding officer must provide firm, predetermined criteria for forming guidelines within which department head must function. As envisioned, the system provides for automatic control in the sense that corrective action is taken spontaneously. Predetermined criteria must provide the basis for advising subordinates what limits of

corrective action they are allowed and when they must notify the superior of action taken or contemplated.

3. The commanding officer will need to check occasionally to determine if horizontal communication is, in fact, being effected and to make certain that the use of authority is appropriate.

4. The use of the system for automatic horizontal communication must be recognized in the organization manual and in the job descriptions for the individuals affected. It must be clearly shown that department heads are required to communicate with other department heads on questions that affect them. This communication to occur before action is taken or before the problem is taken to the commanding officer. This must be a formal, recognized channel of communication.

The reward for effecting a system for automatic horizontal communication, as suggested by Massie, would seem to include more efficient management communication; it might also include the encouragement of the use of ingenuity and resourcefulness by junior officers.

Summary

Horizontal communication provides the basis for more effective organizational action by promoting cooperation and teamwork.

The use of committees and conferences is a well recognized means of encouraging horizontal communication, but

they tend to be uneconomical and often lack decisiveness. Committees are most effective in dealing with inter-departmental problems; are inferior to individual action for problems involving decision making, leadership, execution, and organizing.

The concept of automatic horizontal communication would require that executives on the same level communicate on problems of mutual interest and then take appropriate action at their level. A decrease in total management communication would result. This concept is suggested as being particularly applicable to the local command level in the Navy. It is suggested that additional advantages might accrue in the form of additional time available to the commanding officer for important matters and the encouragement of the use of resourcefulness by junior officers.

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNICATION TRAINING IN INDUSTRY AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE NAVY LOCAL COMMAND

Recognition of the Need for Improvement

The importance of communication in U. S. industry is generally recognized and accepted by executives. It is also realized that a problem exists in this quest for more and better information. The Research Institute of America conducted a survey of 43 company presidents which tended to bear out these statements. In a list of ten major areas of concern, those polled ranked as number one on the problem of providing and getting more information.¹

After a study of the communication problem in U. S. industry, Thomas F. Ball, Jr. said,

Some people consider the communication problem one of the form of communication; others pay attention only to the substance. Some believe that, since face-to-face relations go on informally in every company every day, understanding is by far the most important aspect of the problem. There are those who feel that a company's actions speak far louder than any written or spoken word. Others try to isolate the problem either at the top management, middle management, supervisory, or worker level. Finally, there are

¹ Auren Uris, "Hear and Be Heard--Effectively," Nation's Business, Vol. 47 (August 1959), p. 79.

some who consider the goals and objectives, or lack thereof, of communication programs the real problem area.

The one thing upon which all agree, however, is that there is a communication problem in industry today.¹

Although industry leaders seem agreed that a communication problem exists, not all of them believe that formal training of managers and executives in communication would be beneficial. Langley C. Keyes indicates that many managers are well aware of the importance of production, marketing, personnel, finance, and research, and support further education in these fields readily. In management communication, which "runs like a vital and indispensable stream" through all those fields, these same managers are often less inclined to invest time and money, however.² Many believe that those in positions of managerial responsibility must already have developed the required communication skills and that to provide these people with instruction in the basics of communication would be an insult. Most top managers recognize a need for communication training at the middle and upper levels of executive development. They are aware that most individuals at those levels have

¹ Thomas F. Ball, Jr., "Communications Training in U. S. Industry," (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Government, Business and International Affairs, The George Washington University, 1963), p. 13.

² Langley C. Keyes, "Profits in Prose," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 39 (January-February, 1961), p. 109.

advanced through the organization by way of some specialized skill, and this tendency to specialize at the beginning tends to preclude their being able to communicate with other specialists at the time when it is most important. In addition to the increased need to communicate horizontally, a managerial position often carries with it the requirement for more vertical communication--more contact with top management and more need to convey information to a larger group of better informed subordinates.

It would seem that a similar situation may exist at the local command level in the Navy. Although attempts may be made to provide junior officers with experience in several fields, they often tend to specialize in one department, such as operations or engineering, during the first few years. Upon attaining department head status, or higher, an increased requirement is placed upon them to deal with other areas. It also seems that a comparable situation exists in the officer ranks where maturing officers are placed in positions requiring more contact with the upper level and more need to be able to communicate with all levels. It may be that a training program similar to that in use by industry would be appropriate for the Navy's "young executives".

The Training Programs

Training programs for executive development have increased phenomenally in recent years. One nationwide survey

indicated that 40% or more of the major companies have some sort of in-plant training for this purpose.¹ The programs vary to some extent, of course, but most are aimed at advancing the executives' abilities in the basic skills, including communications.² In order to provide an insight into communication training at the executive level in industry, one researcher wrote to fifty-four companies to determine which had formal communication training programs. To the thirteen who responded in the affirmative, he sent a questionnaire to determine the extent of their programs. Three of the companies were selected as exemplifying successful solutions to the executive communication problem; Kimberly-Clark, Republic Steel, and the Aluminum Company of America.

The Kimberly-Clark program is characterized by the full support of top management and the balance of the programs offered to meet the needs of the individual.³ The first course offered is available to all levels of management and deals with basic communication techniques. The second course, conducted by the company Management Research and Development Staff, is aimed at the more experienced executive and deals

¹ Robert C. Sampson, "Train Executives While They Work," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 31, No. 6, p. 42.

² Frank E. Fischer, "A New Look at Management Communications," Personnel, Vol. 31 (May 1955), p. 491.

³ Ball, loc. cit., p. 63.

with concepts, rather than techniques. Conference leadership and inter-personal communications are stressed. As a check on the effectiveness of the programs, audits are made on those who have participated in either course to determine if any changed behavior pattern is evident.

Republic Steel's program features an even more active participation by top management and also offered both technique and content courses.¹ Most of the trainees in the Republic program are thoroughly experienced executives, the average age being forty-five years. No special selection is required for enrollment in the courses and training is scheduled for the attendees' off duty time. The quality of the training is evaluated by observing the former students by immediate supervisors and by top management.

Salient features of the Aluminum Company of America program also include strong top management support, as well as some variety in course content in order to meet the needs of the individual.² Performance appraisals are used to determine the area of communication improvement most needed by the individual. Three basic approaches are utilized in the training; the problem-solving conference, training in face-to-face communications with individuals, and the principles of good human relations as they affect communication. The

¹Ibid., p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 69.

average trainee has been selected for the training, has been with the company for fifteen years, and is a college graduate. Top management monitors the effectiveness of the program.

From a consideration of the main points of the programs of the three companies which were selected as being representative of industry's programs, some features appear to be characteristic. First, the programs are organized to provide instruction in broader theories, as well as the specific requirements, of communication. Second, the results of the training are closely monitored. That the programs have been in effect for some time would seem to attest to their effectiveness under this close control. Third, the firm and guiding hand of top management is felt in each of the programs; an indication of the importance of the training in the eyes of the highest level executives. Keeping in mind the relatively small sample size of the investigation, it appears that those in industry who have felt the need for formal communication training for executives have found it rewarding.

Many of the conditions that prevail in industry, insofar as the need for formal communication training is concerned, would also seem to prevail in the individual Navy command, as was noted earlier. From a practical standpoint, however, the incorporation of a similar formal communication program for officers in every command might present several problems. Difficulties in providing instructors and in finding time in an already crowded operations schedule might preclude

any practical application of this training in most sea-going commands. For the larger, shore-based command, such a program may be feasible. It would seem appropriate that a Navy-wide syllabus for a program be made available for those commands that evidence a need. Teams of instructors assigned to the various districts could provide the instruction and suggestions to the commanding officer for evaluation of effectiveness. A similar program might be incorporated into an officers' correspondence course for those who are not in a position to take advantage of the person-to-person training. Some limitation in this method are recognized, but it may be considered as a secondary means. The characteristics of industry's programs would provide an excellent framework for the program. The best solution to the management communication problem lies in the key word "awareness", according to Keyes.¹ If local command top management is aware of the problem, it is well along the road toward a solution. Wholehearted support of command would certainly be required for an effective training program--an awareness of the need might be expected to provide that support.

Summary

Industry leaders generally agree that a communication problem exists and most believe that a formal training program

¹Keyes, loc. cit., p. 109.

for executives is worthwhile.

A tremendous increase in company training programs for executives has taken place in recent years. Most of the programs are aimed at advancing basic skills, including the ability to communicate.

All of the companies selected by one researcher as having successfully solved the executive communication training problem had similarly organized programs. All provided for instruction in broad theory as well as specific requirements, all monitored results closely, and all had the active support of top management.

It is suggested that individual commands in the Navy have similar requirements for formal training programs for executives, in that junior officers may tend to specialize in early years and develop a greater need for communication as they advance. The nature of most sea-going commands, however, may make similar formal programs infeasible, although they may be practical for larger, shore-based commands.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

A management communication problem exists in the Navy today at virtually all levels, due in large measure to the tremendous increase in the flow of administrative communication in the past few years. The corrective effort of all hands has been directed. Regardless of what action may be contemplated at higher levels to alleviate the problem, a requirement exists to make use of the most effective methods at the local command level.

An examination of selected current writings on the subject of management communication, along with a study of industry communication training practices, indicates that many of the basic concepts that are applicable to the business world can also be applied to individual Naval units. As a result of this examination and study, it is concluded that certain principles and practices are appropriate and worthy of consideration at that level and, if incorporated, would result in the improvement of management communication. The conclusions:

1. That provisions be made for those persons who must deal with great quantities of written material in the course of their duties to participate in reading improvement programs. This would include virtually all officers and

certain selected enlisted men. Although this is not applicable solely to the local command level, in that the paperwork problem is not peculiar to that level, it is deemed of sufficient importance to the overall improvement of management communication to warrant its inclusion. Since the huge paperwork problem is recognized as one of the major difficulties, providing those who must deal with it directly with this ability seems a basic step.

2. That the effects of informal communication be studied in each individual command. It is not suggested that informal communication can be completely controlled or predicted. It is suggested that it can be influenced and can enhance management communication if an effort is made to understand the personal relationships that provide its impetus. A knowledge of the limitations of informal communication is deemed particularly useful. The concepts of informal communication are more significant at the local command level than at any other because of the close relationships that exist at that level. Where the opportunities are prevalent for personal inter-play on a continuing day-to-day basis, informal organizations are to be expected. This would be particularly true aboard a small ship on an extended cruise, and is applicable to a lesser extent on larger, shore-based activities.

3. That particular care be taken to ensure that the broad missions of the command and of the Navy are made known to each individual. This is considered an essential

adjunct to Barnard's acceptance theory and an indispensable part of downward communication. At higher levels in the Naval organization, the overall mission is more likely to be known and appreciated. At the bottom rung of the ladder, the details of how the job is to be done are more likely to be-cloud the "big picture". Each individual should know how the success or failure of the immediate job at hand will affect the mission of the whole organization.

4. That the number of formal written reports for use entirely within the command be reduced, wherever possible, and informal verbal reporting be substituted therefor. A reduction in paperwork results and the flow of upward communication is encouraged. Since top management and intermediate staffs must emphasize communication external to the organization, this is much less applicable to them. Encouraging verbal reporting for internal uses, with its attendant advantages, is particularly appropriate for individual commands.

5. That a plan be effected to ensure the orderly flow of upward communication which will provide the necessary feedback for management. The informal communication chain may not normally be expected to provide the necessary information. The reporting system required of individual commands by senior commands tends to provide the required information at other levels. For the local commander, the flow of upward communication within the organization may often be taken for granted or the biased opinion of a few be considered as indicative of the

feeling of the whole. A plan is required to ensure that all factions are represented, that the mechanics of how the information is conveyed are known to subordinates, that information is not distorted enroute, and that intermediate levels do not block the flow. Use of facilities independent of the chain of command and the encouragement of confidence in superiors' aims are recommended.

6. That the use of conferences and committees for execution, decision making, and organization be decreased and their use for problems involving the interests of different departments be increased. Recognition of the proper use of committees provides the individual command with an effective means of cutting across lines of authority. This concept is deemed equally applicable to other levels.

7. That the concept of "automatic horizontal communication" be incorporated to require communication between departments, reduce the paperwork flow vertically, and encourage ingenuity and resourcefulness of junior officers. The commanding officer will need to be a wholehearted supporter of the concept and must allow his department heads some discretion in the discharge of their responsibilities. The principles of automatic horizontal communication make it particularly adaptable to organizations where individuals on the same horizontal level have ready access to each other and a close relationship with subordinates. Its use at the local command level should reduce appreciably the communication to and from the commanding officer.

8. That training programs be incorporated as a means of improving management communication capability for Naval officers in certain local commands. Experience of several firms in U. S. industry indicates that a formal program is worthwhile for executives who are advancing and finding new requirements for management communication abilities. A similar situation would seem to exist for Naval officers as they are promoted to higher positions and broader responsibilities. Although a similar need may exist at higher levels, it is at the local command level where most junior officers first meet with the requirement for additional training in this field. The nature of some operational commands may preclude the practical application of formal training in certain instances. Where feasible, however, programs similar to those in use by industry could promote more efficient management communication.

9. That an awareness of the need for effective management communication be emphasized at the local command level. The need for management communication is not necessarily any greater for the local commander than for any other, but may receive less attention at this level, due to the relatively close knit nature of most individual organizations and the personal relationships that exist. The positive attitude and active participation of the commanding officer is a basic requirement of an effective improvement program.

Management and supervision cannot occur without

communication. As a means of attaining managerial objectives, communication improvement is therefore worthy of the manager's best efforts.

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